

MWCC July Cruise Report - Gippsland Lakes 3-5 July 2015

Attendees in order of arrival:

- **Cruise Leaders**, Gary and Lee Honeychurch with Ruby – ‘Lucky Us’ CR 2380
- Tony and Dianne Marshall – ‘Serenity’ CR 2380
- Trevor and Naomi Mansfield with Lilly – ‘White Pointa’ Cruisemaster 700
- John and Joy Beckman with Mocha – ‘JB Squared’ CR 2600

On Friday morning, four Whittleby crews set off towards Johnsonville on the Gippsland Lakes for a midwinter weekend cruise. First to arrive in the early afternoon was Gary and Lee Honeychurch and Ruby, with *Lucky Us*. They were closely followed by Tony and Dianne Marshall with *Serenity*. Trevor and I were not far behind with *White Pointa* and by about 4:30pm, there were 3 boats safely in the water. *Serenity* motored around to Swan Reach Jetty where we were to stay the night. Gary and Lee left their trailer at Johnsonville and Lee drove the car around to Swan Reach Jetty and waited with Tony and Dianne in *Serenity*. Gary waited for us back at Johnsonville to help us launch and then *Lucky Us* and *White Pointa* set off in the fading light up river to Swan Reach for the evening.

John and Joy Beckman with Mocha in *JB Squared* arrived an hour or two later and after dark and so they parked the 2600 up for the night in the Johnsonville car park. Upon arrival, and much to their chagrin, they discovered that all three batteries were flat; they had no power in *JB Squared*. Not to worry, it was now getting quite cold and as a group, we could work that one out in the morning! The Swan Reach pub and its inviting warmth were calling us all.

Trevor and I cooked our first meal on board *White Pointa* and fed Lilly before heading up to the pub to meet the others. Gary drove the car around to pick up the *JB* crew and over drinks, a map was produced and the following day’s plans were made. These plans also included a plan to swap batteries between boats to help charge and start *JB Squared*. The meal was quite late due to an unusually large patronage at the pub that night but no one was complaining! The temperature outside was not looking too inviting. Lee and I came to the conclusion that in the end, they must have turned the heating off in a bid to get rid of us.

John and Joy borrowed Gary and Lee’s car and a torch or two and drove back to Johnsonville to bed down in *JB Squared* while the three remaining crews went back down to the jetty for the evening. That night the temperature went down to only 1 degree! Brrrr even the dogs



were too cold to get out during the night! I was very cosy as Lilly had cuddled up to me and she was like a big hot water bottle. We slept very well.

Saturday morning at Swan Reach with White Pointa, Lucky Us and Serenity



The morning sun at Swan Reach jetty looked promising.

The following morning, as per our plans, we were all ready to head off towards Johnsonville at 9:30am to sort out the battery issue. It was a cruisy start and the morning, while brisk, promised greater things with the sun just peeking out through the clouds. I had brought some strawberries, yoghurt and pancake



Trevor enjoying breakfast!

mix with me and so breakfast on White Pointa was a cracker!

When start up time arrived, the mood was quite jovial and we were all keen to see what the day would bring. The plan was to cruise around to some popular spots on the lakes before mooring up that night in Metung.

It was soon evident that there would be a little delay and that the issues were going to be more than simple battery swaps. Tony and Dianne in *Serenity* were unable to start their engine. It seems the fault which had caused them issues on the Torrumbarry cruise, was to continue despite their best efforts to have it diagnosed and rectified. John and Joy came round in the car from Johnsonville and Trevor and John discussed the wiring together. Trevor, John, Tony, and Gary all got to work on finding solutions. Diagnosis of the fault was made with Trevor up to his elbows in wiring and the problem was solved! So a few hours later, with much dog walking and socialising in between, the team got up and running again. I don't think there were any of us who didn't have some sort of fun during that morning - Trevor loves a challenge, the boys love to fix and conquer things, the girls love to socialise, the doggies got some land time and were properly introduced and none of us were stuck at home or at work. Whittley Club wins again!!

So off we went with only a slightly altered plan. Around to the Johnsonville Jetty, we did the battery swap and helped *JB Squared* launch and then we headed off into another overcast, and at times, sunny day. Importantly, the wind was not a factor and as we headed out of the mouth of the Tambo River into Lake King, the water was very calm. We were cruising on the plane in the direction of Paynesville very quickly. We diverted from the McMillan Straight entrance heading north-west and entered the canals



Four boats in the water at Johnsonville, Saturday morning.

through a narrow, but well marked channel into a strict 5 knot zone. We had a very scenic and slow cruise through the channels and around to meet up with McMillan Straight. It was great to go Whittley-spotting amongst the moorings there. The McMillan Straight runs between Raymond Island and Paynesville and can be quite busy with all sorts of fishing and pleasure craft as well as the Raymond Island Ferry. Motoring through you need to be mindful of the Ferry and give way if it is in motion.



We all headed over to the jetties to tie up for a quick lunch on the boats in Paynesville. The owner of a CR 2080 that was passing by was quite taken with the sight of so many Whittleys travelling together, asking, "Is this a Whittley Convention?"

We stayed for about 40 minutes or so eating lunch in boats with local swans swimming around begging for food at our the rear of the boats. Swans and dogs don't mix very well.

How's the Serenity? At Paynesville moored for lunch and some locals came to say hello.

Then we were back into the boats as the time was ticking on and it was now into the afternoon. We headed west out of Paynesville and around the western end of Raymond Island and into Campbell Channel; which runs east-west, south of Raymond Island. We set off for our evening mooring at



Paynesville for lunch.

Metung. We were amazed at how quick the travel between stops seemed to be, and how close we were to various jetties and stops at all times. Of course, it makes all the difference when the water is flat. (Many of us have seen the Gippsland Lakes when the wind is up and the water is rough.) Our weekend was quite remarkably opposite in terms of boating conditions. The wind held off for the entire trip!

We got down to Metung before dark and many thanks go to Gary and Lee for their guidance of our boats into the jetties; there was work being done to some jetties and there was some tricky manoeuvring to get boats in for the evening.



Tony and Dianne moored at Metung

We were able to take the dogs off for a look around and a photo shoot before dark.

Then it was time for happy hour. The decision was taken to make happy hour on board *JB Squared* as it was very cold to be sitting out on the dock. It was such an enjoyable happy hour and I think everyone was feeling pretty 'happy' as we made our way out and into the Metung Hotel for the evening meal. Maybe all except Mocha that is. He sounded pretty unhappy when the whole crowd left him on the boat. 😊 Poor Mocha.

Dinner was most enjoyable that evening and John and Joy seemed to be the winners with the biggest chicken and leek pie and a rib eye steak we had ever seen! I only got a photo of the pie but the steak was also of monstrous proportions and covered in a pile of mushroom and gravy. Wow!



Joy's MEGA PIE!

More discussion was had about Whittley boats and wiring as well as plans for future modifications and general boating things. Gary brought Football into the general discussion, Happy Birthday was sung for the embarrassed boy at the next table and we all enjoyed a plentiful meal. Retiring to the bar

where the Footy was on seemed like a good plan (to some! 😊) and the map was again produced and plans were made for the following day.

We headed off to boats again to bunk down for the night. A 9 am start was planned and we were on tenterhooks to see if Serenity would fire up again the following day.

On Sunday there was a beautiful sunrise and Gary and Lee recognised one of their neighbours who came and met up with some members and helped us with a group photo beside the jetty. We were told that there was a pod of dolphins in the general vicinity and



Beautiful morning at Metung

there was every chance we would see them today so we were all on the lookout.

The conditions looked very promising for a great day of boating!



Sunday morning Metung, looking promising!

It was time to go and we had a great moment when Serenity fired up on the first try. Success! Tony and Dianne were very relieved and we all had a laugh and a hoorah! As we left Metung, a seal was seen frolicking about, and he had all us dolphin-watchers excited for a few moments! We made our way east towards Lakes Entrance around Bancroft Bay and into Reeves Channel. We then headed southwest into Rigby Channel where we had another dolphin-spotting false alarm! We did see many birds though. We continued southwest between Fraser Island and Rigby Island and east into Hopetoun Channel where we stopped for a look at Barrier Landing. There was a nice floating jetty there and we tied up and took the dogs for a walk through the trees on this very narrow stretch of land out to 90 mile beach. It literally takes you about a minute to walk through!



Barrier Landing jetty Sunday morning.



90 Mile Beach

Ruby the Golden Retriever couldn't help but get in the water for a swim. She did very well holding off for a while, enjoying some exploring, but the attraction of the water was too strong. Mocha enjoyed some exploring and running and Lilly was taken further down the beach for a crazy, boxer run and splash. We all enjoyed the spectacular scenery and with the sun out, it was just stunning.

Upon our return to the jetty, Ruby again spotting water, decided she needed another little frolic. So drying off the dogs became our next priority. Ruby's special towels were taken out and she lay back enjoying the attention. Lilly who had also had a splash was quite sandy and Trevor was determined not to have that in White Pointa!



Ruby being prepared for re entry onto Lucky Us



Lilly being prepared for re entry onto White Pointa

We set off in boats again along Hopetoun Channel toward Lakes Entrance. We paused for a quick photo shoot on boats as we passed the entrance to open ocean and then we headed over into Cuninghame Arm.



JB Squared and Serenity at the entrance

We found some very nice floating finger berths and moored the boats up in a row. It was a glorious sunny day in Lakes Entrance. We went across the road to a coffee shop and had morning tea. Afterwards we walked down the street and had a photo with the boats in the background.



Boats parked up at Lakes Entrance



At Lakes Entrance, Whittleys in the background

Then, as we wanted to be back at Johnsonville to trailer boats and be on our way, we again set off out of Cunninghame Arm and this time, into Reeves Channel heading west back to Lake King. It was in Reeves Channel where we actually found our pod of dolphins. We paused to take photos and watch the show as there must have been 20-30 dolphins just cruising around. The Lakes system must be in a fairly healthy state by the looks of things.



Pod of dolphins seen in Reeves Channel

Our cruise back to Lake King and the mouth of the Tambo River was incredible and much too short. The water was like glass and it was absolutely beautiful to be out there enjoying such stunning scenery.



This CR 2600 sure moves some water!



Lake King, just stunning



Into the mouth of the Tambo River and back to Johnsonville

We slowed for the river entrance and cruised on up to Johnsonville taking photos of the landscape and each other along the way. Lilly poked her head up out of the hatch a number of times, happy to be travelling at a slower pace and she had a good sniff.



Ready for the journey home

When we got to Johnsonville, everyone got busy preparing for the journey home. We made quite a sight with our big boats in the car park and people came by chatting to us. A flat tyre on White Pointa's trailer was quickly rectified by an on board air compressor, problem solved. Before we left, I had a lemon cake that needed eating and we had a little cuppa/snack time together before Gary and Lee lead us in convoy out and onto the highway home. We were on radios as we headed out checking on each other, a loose fender rope rectified, a possible smoking brake was seen to be just exhaust smoke and we all continued and made our way home safely.

What a wonderful, relaxed and fun cruising experience we all enjoyed. The weather held off for us and was really quite exceptional for mid winter. We are very thankful to Gary and Lee for their leadership and planning of this trip. It was great fun to be out boating with you guys. Thanks also to our hosts on Saturday night's happy Hour – John and Joy Beckman on board *JB Squared*; and to Mocha too for putting up with us! Thanks also to Tony and Dianne who make very good company on a cruise. It was great to get to know you both. We hope to see you all again out on the water very soon.

- Naomi and Trevor Mansfield (and Lilly)
(White Pointa)